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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SS-14 SSO-00
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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, AR, PDIP
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS IN ARGENTINA

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REF: STATE 162292

1. ALL OF US HERE WHO HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR NOTING ARGENTINE PROGRESS IN HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE, AND THOSE IN MISSION WHO HAVE THE BEST MEANS OF OBSERVING THE ARGENTINE WAR AGAINST THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT, HAVE GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO REFTEL AND TO POSSIBLE EFFECTS SOME STATEMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL INTEREST AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF IMPROVEMENT HERE MIGHT HAVE. WE CONCLUDE THAT AN INITIATIVE INVOKING THE PRESIDENT'S NAME WOULD NOT BE ADVISABLE AT THIS TIME. THIS COURSE IS, HOWEVER, ONE WE MAY WANT TO TAKE IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

2. WE AGREE THERE ARE ENCOURAGING SIGNS IN FACT THAT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, AND ARGENTINE EXCESSES IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM HAVE DIMINISHED. IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO COMMENT ON A SIGNIFICANT SAMPLING OF THE 342 NAMES LISTED RECENTLY AS THOSE OF PERSONS RELEASED FROM CUSTODY HERE AND CITED BY REFTEL. WE CAN POINT, HOWEVER, TO KNOWLEDGE THAT THREE PRESONS ON THIS LIST HAVE IN FACT GAINED THEIR FREEDOM. WHAT INTERESTS US EQUALLY IS FACT THAT THERE IS INCREASING OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

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THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES HAVE OCCURRED. AS WAR AGAINST TERRORISM WINDS DOWN, IT APPEARS TO US THAT THERE IS BETTER CONTROL BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THOSE OF ITS OWN FORCES WAGING THE WAR. WE FURTHER BELIEVE THAT GENERAL VIDELA AND HIS MODERATE MILITARY

~~Department of State, AVAILABILITY~~

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COLLEAGUES ARE GAINING INFLUENCE IN THE LONGER AND LARGER QUESTION OF WHO ULTIMATELY WILL RULE IN ARGENTINA. (SEE BUENOS AIRES 5281)

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS MUCH THAT DISTURBS US. DIS-APPEARANCE OF EIGHT PERSONS FROM MAR DEL PLATA, ALL LAWYERS OR WIVES OF LAWYERS, IS A BROODING SCANDAL WHICH DAILY ATTRACTS MORE ATTENTION HERE. OVER WEEKEND EMBASSY WAS GIVEN NEW INFORMATION CONCERNING HARASSMENT BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS OF RANKING UNION MEMBERS. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO FIRM DATA ON THIS, WE CREDIT STORIES TO EFFECT THAT AT LEAST FIVE LABOR UNION LEADERS HAVE BEEN THREATENED WITH HARM UNLESS THEY PULL OUT OF LABOR AFFAIRS AND, ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, LEAVE THIS COUNTRY. THE GRAIVER AFFAIR APPEARS TO BE HEADED TOWARD A RESOLUTION WHICH WE FEAR WILL BE UNSETTLING FOR THOSE WATCHING HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS IN ARGENTINA. "LA OPINION" FORMER EDITOR TIMMERMAN HAS, WE ARE TOLD, BEEN RECENTLY TRANSFERRED TO LA PLATA WHERE HE IS AGAIN BEING HELD INCOMMUNICADO AND AGAIN WE FEAR THE OUTCOME WILL BE DISTRESSING.

4. ALL THIS LEADS US TO HESITATE IN USING A PRESIDENTIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF AN IMPROVING SITUATION, LEST SUBSEQUENTLY WE DISCOVER THAT HUMAN RIGHTS GAINS HERE WERE ILLUSORY. CHARGE WILL BE SEEING MINISTER OF ECONOMY MARTINEZ DE HOZ TO QUESTION THE MINISTER WHAT ADVANCES IN HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCES ARE, IN HIS OPINION, WORTH OUR TAKING NOTE OF AND REPORTING TO OUR GOVERNMENT. CHARGE WILL AT THAT TIME TAKE NOTE OF SEVERAL "STRAWS IN THE WIND" WHICH LEAD US TOWARD ENCOURAGEMENT.

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5. A DECISION ON ANY POSITIVE COMMENTS ON THE LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS SCENE SHOULD AWAIT THE REACTIONS OF THE MINISTER OF ECONOMY.
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